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ABSTRACT

This study examines the association between the number of study group sessions a student attends, the student's attitude toward these sessions, and expected grade for the class. Seven hundred and two students participated in the study, 30% of whom never attended a study group session. Of the remaining 70% who did participate, 24% attended five or more sessions, 27% attended three to four sessions, and 17% attended one to two sessions. Out of the twenty-eight classes that were surveyed at Oakland Community College (Michigan) over a 2-year period, Introduction to Psychology had the highest participation rate in the study group (18%). At the end of each semester, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the study group sessions. Fifty percent of the students who attended the sessions said that they were "extremely helpful," and 33% responded "very helpful." "Somewhat helpful" and "not helpful at all" accounted for 3% combined. Data from the attendees and non-attendees were compared, and overall, students who attended the study groups and perceived their group leader as effective expected higher grades. Tables 1 and 2 indicate the frequency of attendees by course, and the correlation between the number of sessions attended and the perception of helpfulness and expected grade. (AS)

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RUNNING HEAD: SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION AND EXPECTED GRADE

ED 427 804

Influence of Study Group Attendance and Students' Perceived Helpfulness on Expected Grade

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An earlier version of this paper was written while a student at the University of Michigan.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the association between the number of study group sessions a student attends, the students' perceived helpfulness of those sessions and their expected grade. Twenty-eight classes were surveyed at Oakland Community College over a two-year period. A total of 702 students participated in the study. At the end of each semester, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the study group sessions. The data from the attenders and non-attenders was compared. Overall, those students who attended study group sessions predicted higher grades and perceived the sessions as more helpful.

Study Group Attendance and Expected Grade

The study group program is an academic support program based on the concept that students are more likely to persist in college if they establish a feeling of belonging to their educational institution. In addition, the study group program is concerned with the academic performance of the student. Its focus is on peer and collaborative learning.

The study group (SG) model differs from traditional tutoring in the following ways: (1) instead of targeting only academically challenged students, the goal of the SG program is to help all students in a number of courses from developmental to advanced (2) study group leaders (SGL) are required to have successfully completed the course; (3) SGL are required to attend the class with the students, complete course work and model appropriate learning behaviors.

Programs designed similar to the study group model have been successful nation wide. American River College in Sacramento, California has implemented a similar program in math and science classes called "Peer Assisted Learning." McCuen (1996) examined outcomes from this program for the 1994-1995 academic year. These outcomes indicate an 86.6% success rate for program participants compared to 55.2% for non-program participants. In addition, McCuen found that persistence rates were higher for participating students.

The usefulness of the Supplementary Instruction (SI) program was tested in introductory accounting, economics, and biology courses at LaGuardia Community College in New York. A comparison was made between SI sections and non-SI sections of the same course taught by the same professor. Results of this research show that the passing rate in the SI section increased by 15%. According to Zaritsky (1994), "The SI

biology section was most successful with percentage of A's increasing from 8% to 17% and B's increasing from 13.3% to 25%. All passing rates increased and failure rates decreased in all SI sections."

Many of these active peer learning programs are designed to target under-prepared students and students with special needs (i.e., ADD, LD, ESL, etc.). Literature reviewed indicates that academic support has traditionally been targeted to more academically challenging courses like science and math. The OCC model proposes that all students could benefit from additional academic support. That is, there are specific study techniques helpful for all students. In addition, this study fills a gap in the literature on learning techniques, since it is intended for community college students.

The study group program that will be examined in this research report has been implemented in a variety of advanced as well as introductory level courses. The program goes beyond the usual science and math courses and involves such courses in the fields of social science, foreign language, political science, humanities and natural science as well. Thus, the OCC model does not focus solely on historically difficult academic courses.

The current hypothesis predicts a relationship between the number of sessions attended, perception of helpfulness of those sessions, and expected grade. Students who attend study group sessions and perceive them as helpful will expect higher grades than those who do not attend.

Method

Participants

Seven hundred and two Oakland Community College students responded to the survey from December, 1996 through the summer of 1998. All students were attending a

class where a study group leader was present. However, not all participants attended study group sessions. Data on the gender distribution was not available. A total of twenty-eight classes were surveyed over a two-year period.

Procedure

Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on the last day of class. They were asked to indicate their current course and semester. The first question asked, "How many sessions did you attend?" Possible response choices included, "0, 1 to 2, 3 to 4, and 5 or more." Question two asked, "How helpful did you think the sessions were?" Responses were measured on a five point Likert scale (1 = Not helpful, 5 = Extremely Helpful). The third question asked, "What grade do you expect to get in the class?" Possible response choices were "A, B, C, D, and F." Grades were measured on a 4 point scale where A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0.

Participants who did not attend any study group sessions were asked to choose one of three responses: 1)"Did not attend because I did not feel it was necessary," 2) "Did not attend because of conflict with another class or work," or 3) Did not attend for other reasons than those listed above.

Results

Descriptive Results

Of the twenty-eight classes surveyed, Introduction to Psychology had the highest participation rate in the study group at 18%, College Algebra, Statistics and Calculus I combined had a 10% study group participation rate, while Art Appreciation had a 6% rate and Accounting I had a 5% rate (See Table 1).

A total of 702 students responded to the survey, 30% never attended a study group session, 70% attended one or more sessions. Of that 70%, 24% attended five or more sessions, 27% attended three to four sessions and 17% attended one to two sessions.

Fifty percent of the student who attended the sessions said that they were "extremely helpful," 33% responded "very helpful," 13% responded "moderately helpful," and "somewhat helpful" and "not helpful at all" were 3% combined.

There were three reasons why students did not attend the study group sessions. 35% of the students did not attend because "they did not feel it was necessary", 8% responded "other", and 56% claimed that they "wanted to attend but could not because of conflict with another class or work." An Analysis of Variance was computed and the results conclude that students who did not attend the sessions because they "did not feel it was necessary" expected higher grades (M=3.45, SD=.81) than those students who did not attend because of class conflict (M=2.83, SD=.84), $F(2,484) = 11.43$, $p < .0001$.

Analytic Results

A 2-sample t-Test was run on students expected grade of attenders and non-attenders. The students who attended the study group sessions predicted significantly higher grades (M=3.21, SD=.81) than those who did not attend (M=3.07, SD=.88, t= -1.96, p<.05).

Inspection of Table 2 reveals a small correlation between number of sessions attended and expected grade. However, a large correlation was found between expected grade, perceived helpfulness, and number of sessions attended. Therefore, the best predictor of expected grade is perceived helpfulness, provided the student is an active

participant in each session. A Partial correlation path analysis was computed to demonstrate this relationship and is displayed in Figure 1.

Discussion

The data obtained in the current study provides support for the proposed hypothesis. Thus, students who attend study groups and perceive their study group leader as effective, expect higher grades.

This research takes the first step in establishing an association between the study group program and positive outcomes for students. However, because the independent and dependent variables were measured at the same time, temporal order cannot be established. Furthermore, future research will need to develop a pre and post test measure of academic skills. These findings should be compared to students who attend study group sessions with those who do not attend.

This future research should obtain information about each participant such as age, gender and high school grade point average. Also, future research should separate out the impact of the study group leader and study group per se, on expected grade.

The present study has potential impact on students as well as on colleges. Studying how and why people learn can lead to a wide range of practical classroom applications which can result in an improved educational system and especially impact the manner in which we teach to ensure that students are learning.

References

McCuen, S. (1996). *Peer Assisted Learning Project Update and New Beacon Outcomes; Research Briefs.* Eric No-Ed393517.

Zaritsky, J. (1994). *A Peer Tutoring Program at LaGuardia Community College.* Eric No-Ed373850.

Table 1 Frequency of Attenders by Course

Course	# of Attenders	% of Attenders
Introductory to Psychology	144	18.95
Calculus I	42	5.98
Art Appreciation	41	5.84
Accounting I	34	4.84
Fundamentals of Speech	34	4.84
Accounting II	32	4.56
Sociology	31	4.42
Child Development	30	4.27
College Algebra	27	3.85
French I	26	3.70
Nutrition	13	3.28
Interpersonal Communication	23	3.28
Abnormal Psychology	22	3.13
History I	21	2.99
Statistics	21	2.99
Trigonometry	19	2.71
Prep for Algebra	17	2.42
Spanish I	16	2.28
Psychology of Organization and Behavior	16	2.28
World Religions	13	1.85
Elementary Algebra	12	1.71
Sign Language I	11	1.57
History II	11	1.57
German I	10	1.42
French II	10	1.42
Life Science	10	1.42
American History	9	1.28
Chemistry I	8	1.14

Table 2

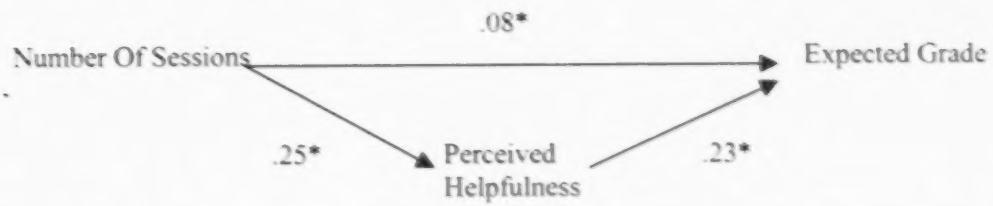
Correlation's Between Number of Sessions Attended and Perception of Helpfulness and Expected Grade

	Expected Grade	Number of Sessions
Perception of Helpfulness	.27 *	.33*
Expected Grade	1.00	.16*

p<.01

Figure 1

Partial Correlation's with Number of Sessions Perceived Helpfulness and Expected Grade



*p<.0001